



Important Facts for Parents to Know about

The Varicella (Chicken Pox) Vaccine

The varicella vaccine can prevent chickenpox — a common childhood disease that can lead to serious complications.

- Each year 3 to 4 million people get chickenpox in the United States. Most cases occur in children under 10 years of age.
- Although chickenpox is often a mild and common childhood disease, it can have serious consequences. Consequences include the need for hospitalization (in more than 23 out of 10,000 cases), pneumonia (in more than 10 out of 10,000 cases), inflammation of the brain (in more than 1 out of 10,000 cases), and death (in less than 1 out of 10,000 cases).
- People with chickenpox are predisposed to infection with group A streptococcus (GAS). GAS is known as the “flesh-eating bacteria” because it can cause a life-threatening infection that rapidly destroys tissue. Treatment of this deep infection requires antibiotics and surgery to remove the infected tissues.

The vaccine effectively protects at least 90% of children and adolescents who are immunized.

The majority of children who get the varicella vaccine (more than half) have *no side effects* at all. Of those children who do have a side effect, most will have only a mild reaction.

- Mild reactions include soreness or swelling where the shot was given, fever, and mild rash (a mild form of chickenpox infection).
- Aspirin-free pain reliever can be used to reduce fever and soreness associated with mild reactions.

In very rare cases (far less than 1 child out of 10,000 shots given, or 0.002% of cases) children have a serious reaction.

- These include seizure caused by fever and pneumonia.
- If you do notice any serious reactions, you should call your doctor immediately.

It is important to understand that your child's chances of being harmed by chickenpox is greater than his/her chances of being harmed by the vaccine.

- Immunizations are one of the most important ways parents can protect their children against serious infectious diseases.

parents:

Please also read the Vaccine Information Statement on the varicella vaccine from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for other important information, including who should and who should not get the vaccine.